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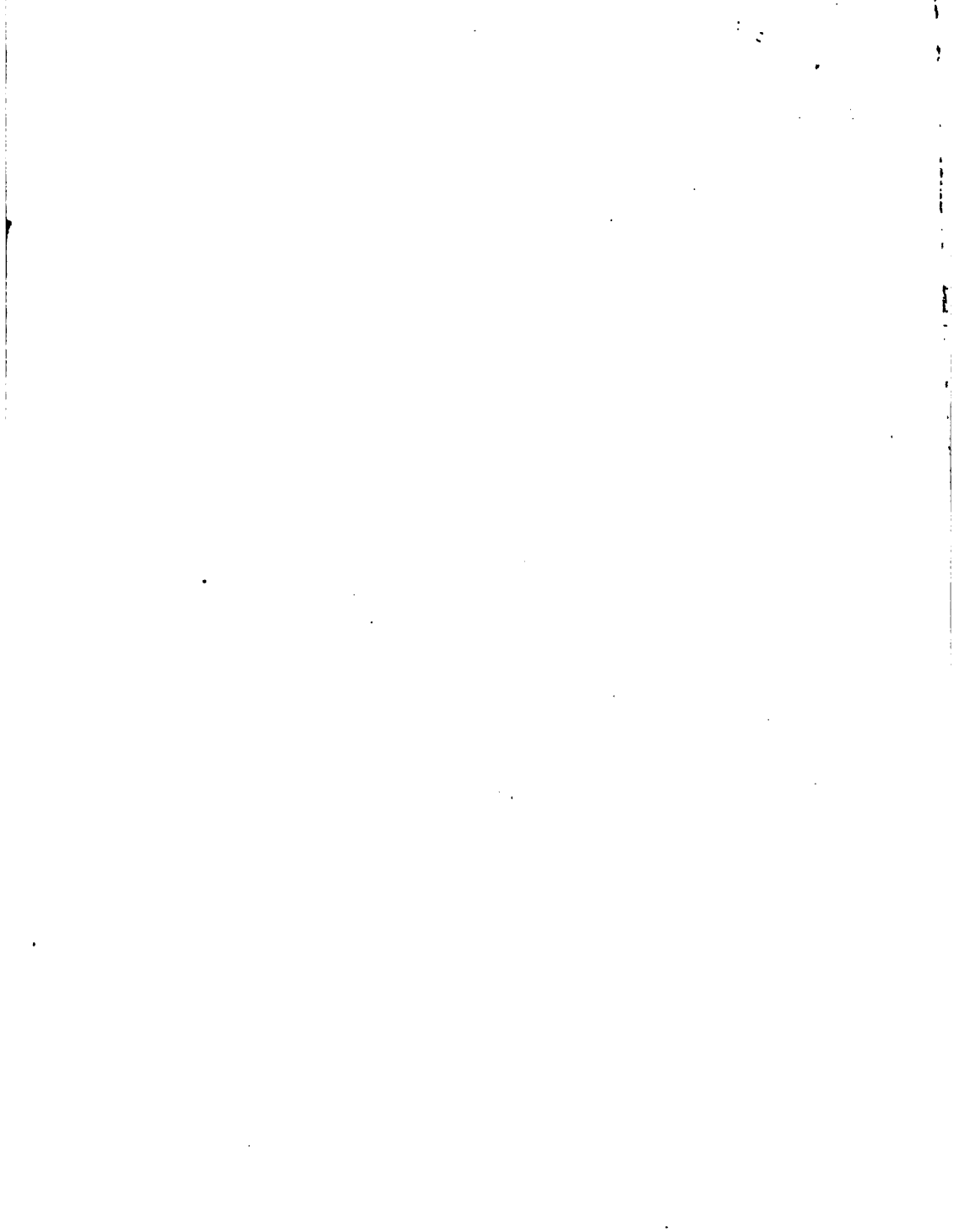
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LETTER AND SPIRIT



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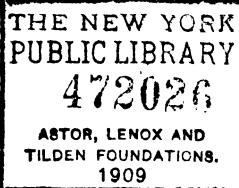
Letter and Spirit

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BY
A. M. RICHARDS

BOSTON

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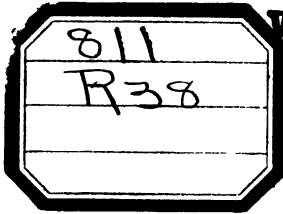


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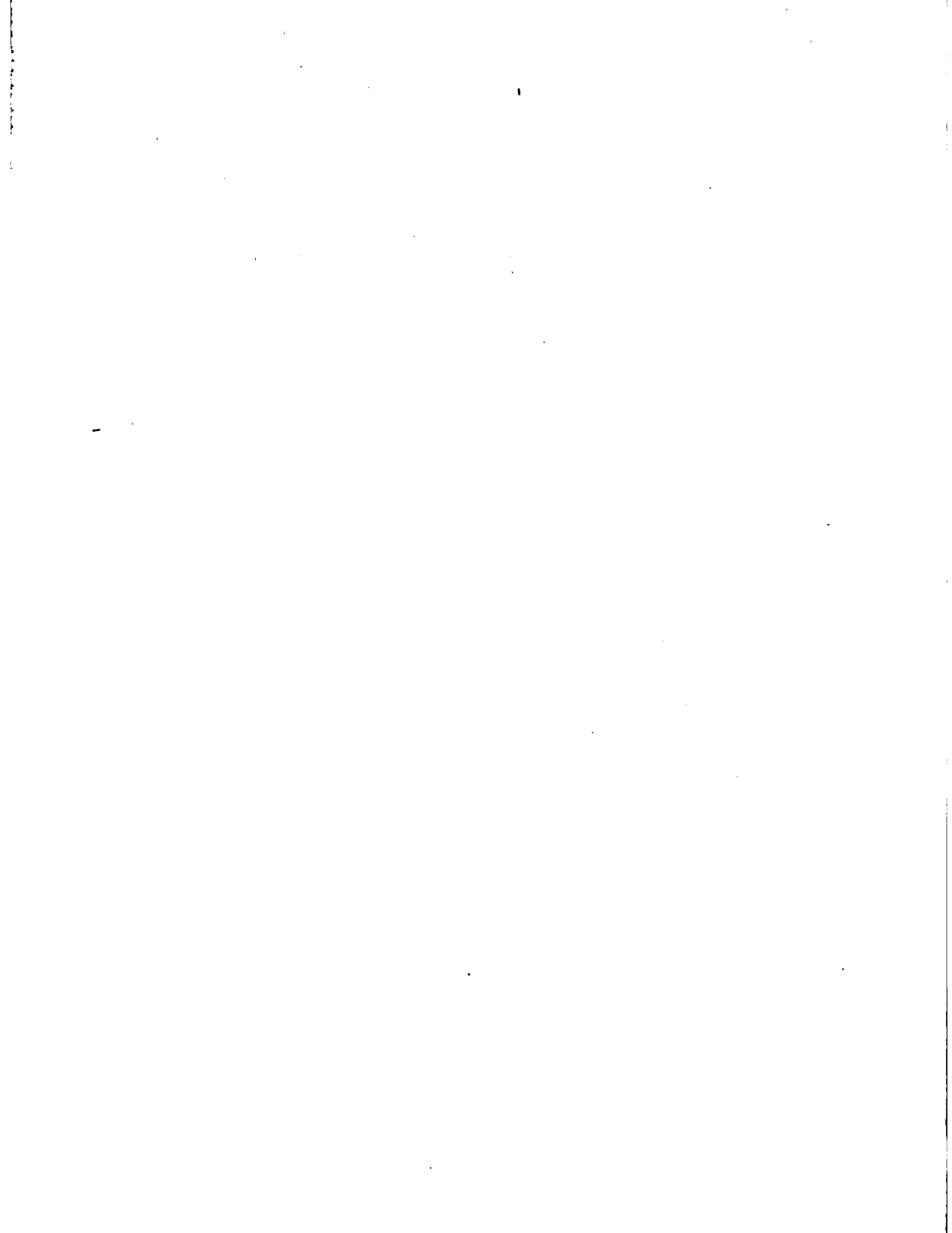
PREFACE.

THESE verses are part of a design, unfulfilled by the Author and long since abandoned, of giving expression to each of the manifold aspects of an unchanging and unchangeable truth.

The plan was not suggested by any bias of personal conviction, and, although there is frequently a meaning in the order in which two or three of the sonnets follow each other, there is no idea of argument or controversy in their arrangement.

A. M. R.

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*LET not Theology nor Sentiment, —
That half-interpreter of life, — be bold
To speak of things that Faith alone may hold
Of right divine, and yet be ill content
That Art should dare invade their element, —
Art, the grave master, with clear vision cold
And love of light in all the manifold
Converging rays that in the truth are blent.*

*Religion hath no science and no form
But in that silent world of faith, and we
Who would create her image must employ
The unsparing hand of Art : all night and storm
And fear that shape her outline we must see
No less than her indwelling light and joy.*

II.

*MIGHT I but with Jehovah, face to face,
Plead as with man, that he might surely bear!
And the swift message came: The Lord is near;
For thine own country is His dwelling-place.
I said: The end of all things draweth apace,
And when these mocking shadows disappear,
Shall I, from out the silence and the fear,
Behold the meaning of Thy mortal race?*

*As dawn, in night beginning far away
Becomes at last a luminous atmosphere,
So from the regions of the perfect day
The answer comes forever sad and clear:
Nay! thou, a part of some stupendous whole,
Shalt never, never comprehend thy soul.*

III.

*HERE in the darkness we abide, and know
That elsewhere in the spaces there is day
But not for us. Though priest and people pray,
And tides of exaltation ebb and flow,
No light has ever really pierced below
Their solid dome: no sign of yea or nay
Has told how far their wistful fancies stray,
How high their earth-born aspirations go.*

*Knows the true seer that all his treasured lore
Is but the echo of the hopes of man,
And holds no answer from the silent night;
Let him be firm and lead us more and more,
To be as kings of darkness, rather than
The slaves of an imaginable light.*

IV.

*DENY thyself the false humility
That claims the merciful justice God and man
Accord to ignorance, in some infinite plan
Thou, first and last, who art forever free
To know thy God! The freedom that must be
To recognize the depths we cannot span,
And limitations that with thought began,
Thou hast confounded with the liberty*

*That fetters conscience; that has dared to choose
Its own false limit; intercepting light,
To boast denial and darkness that refuse,
That fear conviction, while to left and right
Day hastens on the mountains, and thy sun
Goes down upon the work of God undone.*

V.

*GOD speaketh and saith: I do remember thee
When thou wentst after Me in the wilderness;
No desert could withhold thee, no distress
Of drought or fire, no peril of land or sea
Could come between thy burning love and Me;
Where art thou now?—Ah, Lord, Thy world did press
With love that seemed more dear to save and bless,
With life more near than Thine eternity.*

*But now, my Father, if it be Thy will,
Would that I might return to Thee before
The night, that even now is gathering cold.—
Return! I will have mercy on thee still
With everlasting kindness; but no more
Canst thou draw near with that same love of old.*



VI.

*GOD saith to man: 'Behold! from year to year,
As many wandering years as separate
Thy ways from Mine,—through all the love and hate,
And false ambition that betrayed thee,—here
Am I, forever! What is thy career
To Me? To Me there is no soon nor late;
On thee my silent angels always wait,
Unmindful of thy futile doubt and fear.*

*And if, with failing hands and faith made dim,
Thou dost return, and hast no longer power
To love or fear Me, as in that stern bower
Of passionate youth, when 'midst my seraphim
Thou soughtst to shine, whatever thou may be,
Can I be less than God Himself to thee?*

VII.

*I, LONELY shepherd watcher, not in vain
So many years the changeless splendor cold
Of slow returning starry fires behold,
The dawn, the bush of noon, the awful plain
Of the dark sea. Here, in the sun and rain,
Dread presences forever new and old
Encamp about me, and the silent world
Bears witness that no mortal dares arraign.*

*It is not faith in Thee, Thou who dost live
Forever in my sight, that faileth me,
But faith in mine own self. Thou, who dost lead
The legions of Thy midnight desert, give
The hope, the patience in myself to see
That in Thine image I am made indeed.*

VIII.

*THE sun has risen beyond the wide gray beach;
From the fair depths of morning comes a thrill
Of hope and courage, and a firmer will
The narrow way of higher life to reach.
Shall not some new-born power of thought and speech
This day the sacred dreams of youth fulfil,
Transcend these bounds of relative good and ill
By some eternal line, defining each*

*With clearness no expedients that assail
Weak wills can darken? Oh, to be only sure
Of absolute Right, and never more to quail
Before a tutored conscience, nor endure
The weight that other men's convictions give
The fears that reason cannot all outlive!*

IX.

*THERE shall no sign be given to thee, it said,
The Voice that answered. And a little space
I mused in sorrow, longing for the grace
Of them who know that Jesus is not dead.
At last it said : But be thou comforted
To know that He has lived, and has a place
The Chief among the legions of His race,
And in your grave has where to lay His head.*

*Then in a vision of the Roman past
I saw the form that was the Son of Man ;
And knew at last that this indeed was He
Whose own received Him not : the First and Last,
The Light that with the Word of God began ;
The Kingdom and the Power and Victory.*

X.

*AND there came unto me and spake to me
That Angel of the Seven who to John
Showed the great city of pure gold upon
The mountain, saying to me: Come and see
Him who doth sit upon the throne.— And he
Went forth before me in the heavenly dawn
Toward the great Light in shining clouds withdrawn,—
The Form that moveth in eternity.*

*I felt the Power that makes unchanging law,
The Love that breaks the law it cannot change,
The strife and sorrow that in heaven be;
And with a sudden burning faith I saw,
Beyond the limits of my sceptic range,
A vast new meaning of the Trinity.*

XI.

*THOU who dost sit among us at the hearth,
Thou also art with Him of Galilee,
The Virgin-born: thy speech betrayeth thee;
And fearing the encounter of their mirth,
I, who beyond the dearest things of earth
Have held Him dear, made answer sorrowfully:
I know Him not; nothing is He to me,
Nothing the legends of His death and birth.*

*Then to the Christ within my soul I said,
Hoping that Simon's grace might still be mine:
Dear Lord, to men like these can I lay bare
The mystic union that with Thee has wed
My inward life? — The Spirit made no sign;
Christ heard me not, He was no longer there.*

XII.

*THE inner veil of heaven is rent in twain ;
Thy Lord is dead, and death has claimed his own ;
The seal shall not be broken on the stone,
Nor the stone graven where thou hast him lain.
Hadst thou had faith but as this living grain,
He would have lived ; but lost in death, unknown
He sleepeth, and unto the Father's throne
The Son of man shall never rise again.*

*Now art thou strong ; and thou hast need of strength,
Lest in thy plastic conscience clear and still
The impress of His beauty should remain
To haunt the friendless years, and light at length
The spark of doubt in thy irresolute will :
Was this the Son of God that I have slain ?*



XIII.

*ON the chill Lenten desert, ah what breath
Of spring in distant vales of rose and palm;
And in clear Eastern heavens what Wisdom calm
Unto the troubled silence answereth!
Go thou abroad to all the earth, He saith,
Say thou that before Abraham was, I Am;
Forever dies the sacrificial Lamb,
Forever rises from the bands of death.*

*Say thou: Not only in Judea born,
Not only on the cross of Calvary slain,
The Eternal Spirit everywhere has worn
The Life it evermore shall wear again.
Ah, Church of God, why sittest thou here forlorn?
Lo, every morning is thine Easter morn!*

XIV.

*“LORD, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!”
Or teach me that it weighs not in Thy scale
A grain of dust. Though faith and knowledge fail,
And this dark world stand in so clear relief
Against Thy far, pale heaven; though in these brief
Sad years, so much of life without avail
Make life eternal but an idle tale:
If it be possible, help mine unbelief!*

*Assure me of the truth I slowly see
That doubt is but an ailment of the mind
Which life may heal not, and that we shall find
The paths of darkness also lead to Thee;
That faith means often patience with the brief
Confusing shadow of our unbelief.*

XV.

*WE cannot love the truth who will not dare
To look with steadfast eyes upon her face,
Who fear the chambers of her dwelling place,
Nor the reproach of serving her can bear.
We love not God who only in the fair
New morning praise Him, and forbear to trace
That presence through the deepening night of space,
Of power that will not or that cannot spare.*

*The world is beautiful and fair and young,
The world is terrible and dark and old, —
A thousand generations bring no change;
And only he whom Truth enthroned among
Her contradictions charmeth can behold
Jehovah's face, — in beauty sad and strange.*

XVI.

*TO lucid minds the thoughts of Nature are
The thoughts of God, however needless seem
Their challenge to our faith in this long dream
That we call life. Since we must see that war
And waste and madness, and the evil star
That rules the myrmidons, are of some scheme
Uncancelled, let them drift upon their stream
Apart from this ideal good they mar.*

*For why contend we with their destiny
To charm the sullen life that multiplies,
And hastens to destruction at our feet?
They turn again to rend us; they can see
Nothing but midnight in our morning sky,
Nor savor but of bitter in our sweet.*

XVII.

*THOUGH thou hast all the wisdom of the years,
And mastery over ignorance such as brings
The deep relations of discordant things
To make the harmony of the living spheres;
Though from out earth and heaven unto thine ears
Unfold their magic awful, viewless kings
That reign in mountain summits and the rings
Of the vast seas; yea, though thy spirit bears*

*The Voice beyond the farthest stars, — the Word
That is the Life, — if love for thine own kind,
So easily lost, so hard to keep or find,
Abide not with thee, all that thou hast heard,
All thou hast spoken, cannot save thy soul:
Thou art no part of life's immortal whole!*

XVIII.

*ALONE in this dim summer light, — the air
Of ocean in the long sea-grass, and flight
Of shining mist above me, what delight
To seem a part of Nature's self, and dare
For these brief moments to forget my share
In life's great tragedy of Wrong and Right
Before the listening heavens. On what clear height
Far from the inward voices, from despair*

*Above the irretrievable years, thou reignst,
O Nature, fair as in the dawn of Earth!
Nor storms nor sunbeams ever reach thy soul;
And I, forever conquered, fight against
The inexorable limits of my birth,
And learn no wisdom from thy self-control.*

XIX.

*WHEN they who sleep the sleep of youth awake,
And first discern how grievous was their fault
To dream that passion might their lives exalt
Above the never-changing laws that make
Eternal change prevail, they cannot break
The charm of hope. Although their courage halt,
They evermore must arm to the assault
Of some fierce stronghold none may ever take.*

*Hope! thou who dost our morning prayer uplift,
And at the eventide forsakest thy trust,
Take thou thy treacherous anchor from our souls!
Better with winds and currents of Nature drift,
Better in deep-sea calms of knowledge rust,
Than to be moored in tidal depths and shoals.*

XX.

*ALAS, what hope! Too far it would transcend
Thy mercy, thou most just and righteous King,
Unto this winter of my soul to send
Airs from the vales of thine immortal spring.
Yet in this vernal morn the glimmering
Of bidden life that stirs from end to end
Of all the woodland still would fondly bring
Such hope as doth the faithless soul befriend.*

*O Life! take if thou must what happiness,
What power and possibility of good,
There might have been; let all thy fair success
Be only promise of a springtime mood,
If but thy promise still begin anew,
And Hope forever to herself be true.*

XXI.

*NONE ever knew the silent Fates. Although
The texture of the thread they hold and spin,
The course of our life's useless discipline,
They, haply with a futile pity, know,
Yet always must the fibre twine and glow
And darken ; always Nature's toil begin
The slow insistence of an ancient sin, —
The tired will, the strong untiring foe.*

*Believe not even He who watches fate
Is happy as thou countest happiness ;
That it repents Him not the open gate,
And that broad way through His fair wilderness,
That lures so many a feeble will He gave
To pitfalls where His mercy cannot save.*

XXII.

*WHAT above all, to us who need all things,
Were first? Ah, were there some philosophy
To so disarm the threats of Fate that we
Might keep the faith that in our wanderings
Is always near, yet always taketh wings;
Might hold some link between the things we see
And heaven's majestic unreality,
Our turmoil, and the silent King of kings!*

*But could there be a link with heaven more great
Than that a God with us was born and died?
Or be philosophy that conquers fate
If not the voice that in the desert cried:
"Return! Return! It is not yet too late!"
To man's repentance nothing is denied.*

XXIII.

*TO that rare soul, in whom the lineage lives
Of spiritual kings, no sevenfold furnace flame
Of life's inevitable wisdom gives
Scathe of the barm through which his manhood came.
He sees beyond those dread alternatives:—
The high despair we boast in culture's name,
And that sad, stoic courage that outlives
Our faith and hope and youth's devoted aim.*

*To him the ever watchful heavens award
The meed of that divine philosophy
That false conviction can no more assail:—
Faith in himself through destiny ill starred,
Faith in the assurance of his faith that be,
At one with God, will over Fate prevail.*

XXIV.

*KNOW thou who seest the havoc years have made
In some false life that knows it once was fair,
Not greater unto thee the ruin laid bare
Than to itself, not more of thine afraid
Than of its own just sentence. Ah, betrayed
Of creeping habit, heedless Nature's snare
For souls that trust her, who can tell what prayer
Has cried to Nature's God too late to save!*

*"My yoke is easy and My burden light:"
But one who his own burden long hath borne,
Who has the yoke of this world too long worn,
Loves not the freedom of the inward might.
Youth alone knows the paths of self-control
Among the perils that surround the soul.*

XXV.

*HE gives more power unto his bated chain
Who overrates the strength; and we who lie,
The vassals of our weakness, may too high
Have set the mark that shines forever vain.
Let us accept the slow, unstable gain,
And even our failure, who go forth to try
Our strength with demons, such as did defy
The sword of Michael on the heavenly plain.*

*Not always are we vanquished in the fight
That is not won. For He whose life hath worn
Our imperfection, knows that faith can win
No surer triumph than the secret might
Of hope that is of swift repentance born,—
Of patience with the victories of sin.*

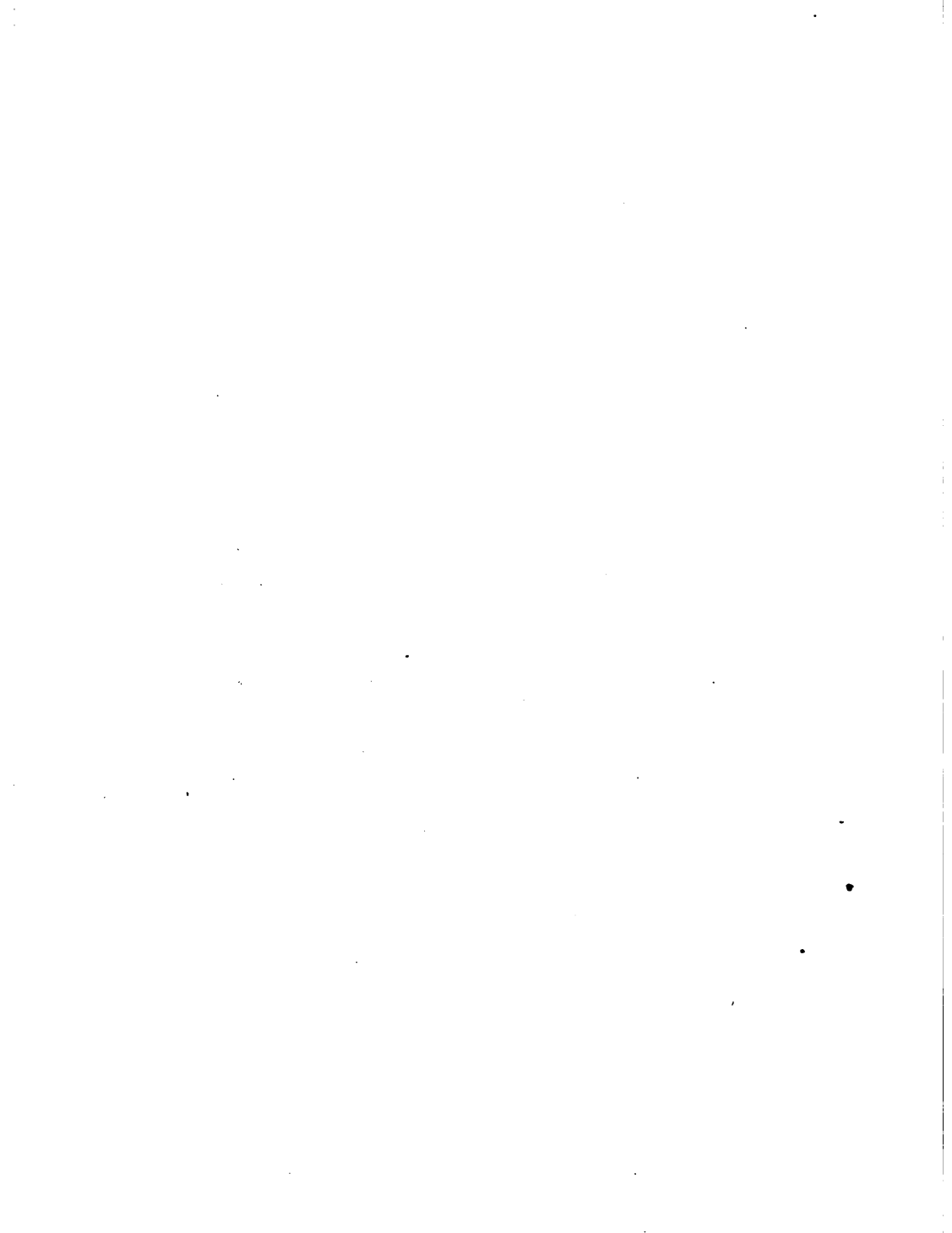
XXVI.

*TAKE from me what thou wilt, O sceptic mind !
The mansions of the immaterial space, —
All thou canst measure of the measureless grace
Of that Intelligence whose eye is blind
To mortal folly. Thou hast not divined
The innate attitude of prayer, the base
Of all things, wherein they that seek His face
Shall find Him, and their lost possessions find.*

*We so forget the power of God we speak
As though His presence with us were the sport
Of any chance encounter, and our weak
And wavering faith were His supreme resort :
But though thy soul know not her heavenward wings
Him lovest thou not in any wanderings.*

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XXVII.

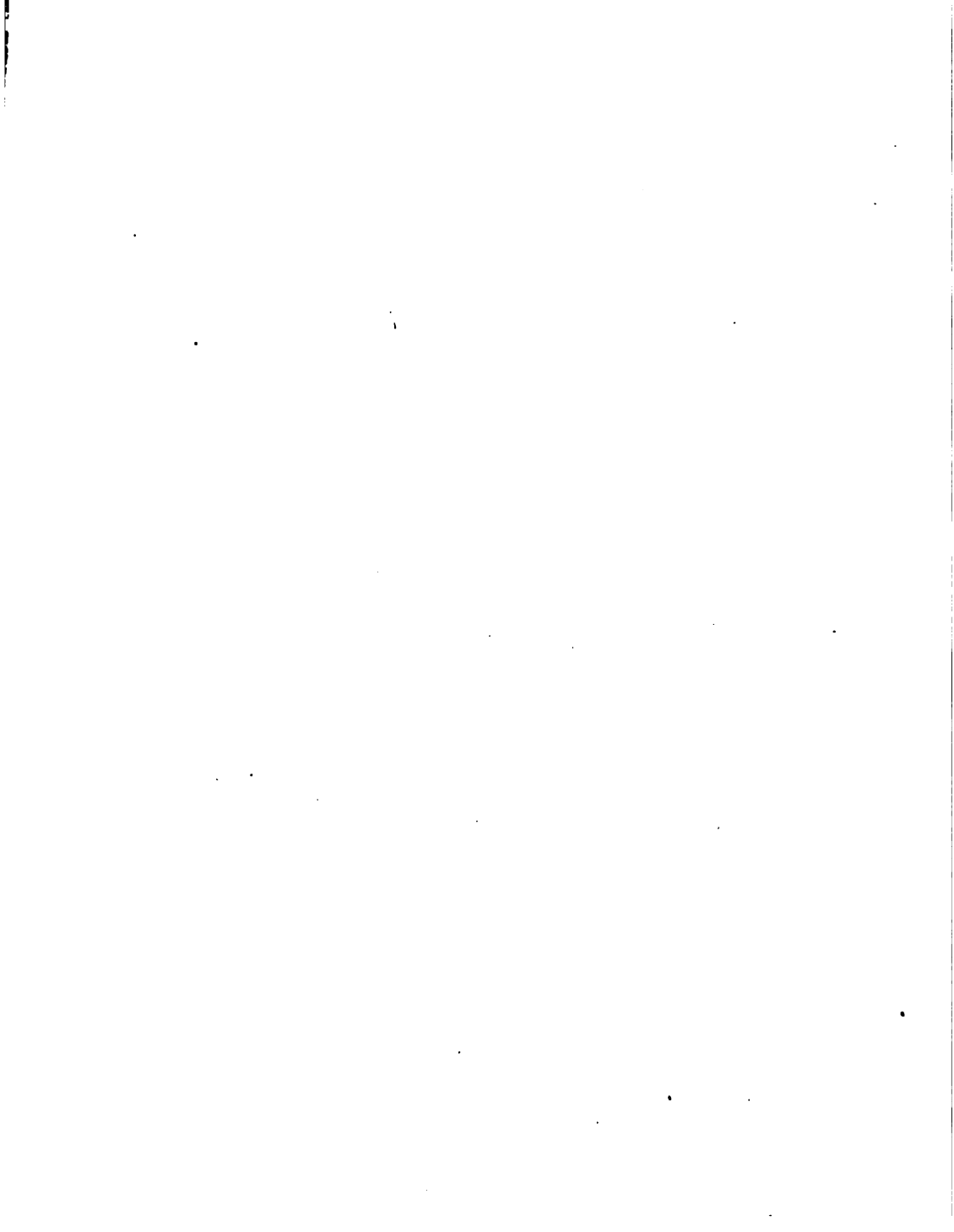
*IS it thou who knowest not, who dost not dread
The Nemesis of God? Always before
Thine eyes she stands, the threshold of thy door
She enters even now with noiseless tread;
And ever when thou layest down thy head
She is it whom thou dost in vain implore
To call the illusions of the past once more,
And for these stones give back their living bread.*

*Thou knowest her not; thee she has always known,
Ever pursuing, neither in grief nor wrath
Thy footsteps, nor in kindness; but alone
In silence, where thou hast ordained her path.
Mercy has no such power in the boundless heaven
As thou thyself to Nemesis hast given.*

XXVIII.

*FROM that cold height where Law can never yield
His place to Mercy, comes to mortal ear
The cry, "Renounce!" — that all who pause to hear
Must as they will interpret. On some field
Of self-obedience they are called to wield
A sword of fire whose names are written clear
In heaven or in earth; and in the sphere
Of hidden life, however we may shield*

*A slothful will, the unexplained command
Haunts the convictions of the troubled mind
With dreams of rest. It may be that we live
Upon the borders of a Promised Land
Where the obedience of the Law would find
A recompense that Mercy cannot give.*



XXIX.

*AT last, O God! I come to do Thy will,—
Unto the narrow pathway of the Cross;
I, who upon the seething ocean toss
Of these dread sweet temptations that fulfil
The cry of life, yet have such power to kill
The soul. Of all things will I suffer loss
That I may win Thee only, who across
Dark wastes of heaven dwellest in Thy still*

*And bidden light, alone. Thy counsels fall
But as a silence midst confusing noise
Of earthly voices, yet I hear Thy call,—
And dead to all the music of their joys,
I come to live henceforth for Thee alone,
To give up all that I have called my own.*

XXX.

*OF all the fair possessions Life recounts
Is it then true that nothing is her own,
And that by Restoration she alone
Unto the fulness of her title mounts?
Is then that cry of martyr deeds, "Renounce!"
The only key to victory they have known,
Who have the stronghold of the will o'erthrown,
Who drink of power from superhuman founts?*

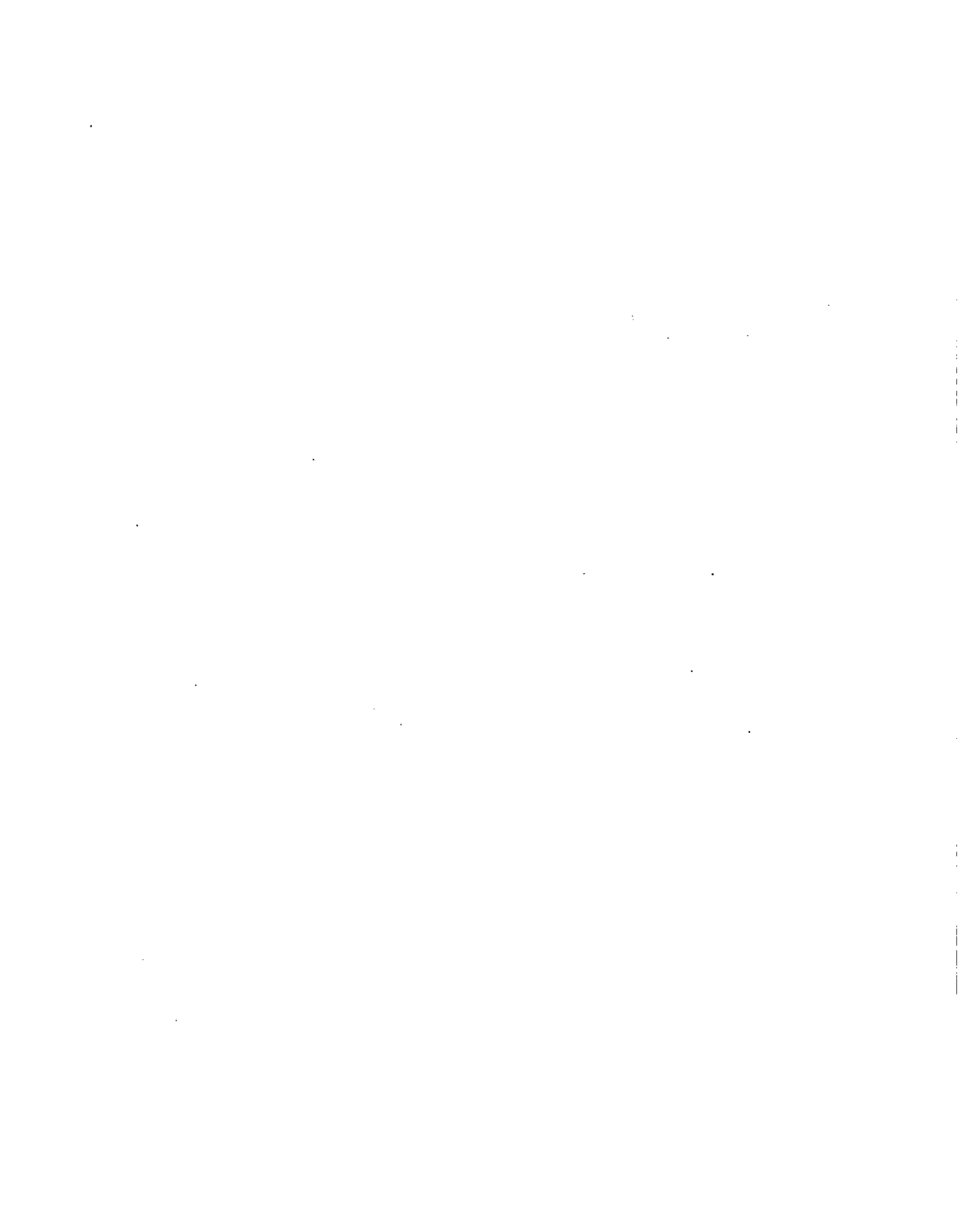
*Ah, even such victory may be dearly bought,
And such possession, loss! My life, no more
Even for those glimmering principalities
Give up the birthright of thy freeborn thought,
Nor vex the sunshine of thy native shore
With dreams that rove the dark surrounding seas.*



XXXI.

*CHILD that awakest from thy Mystic dream,
Whose tired will shall nevermore aspire
To those far heights, the Land of cloud and fire,
Of the will of God, I, too, have known the gleam,—
Mirage of a waste desert,—that doth seem
To bend the impossible heavens to our desire;
Have seen the light of faith die from those higher
Enchanted summits of the life supreme.*

*Yet here may life begin; nor thy vain cross
Be all in vain,—the sacrifice, the pain
Of self-deception not forever loss
In the self-knowledge that is endless gain.
Learn thou the limit of the soul, and live
To seek such peace alone as life can give.*



XXXII.

*HERE, where not always we behold the race
Unto the swift, we who by random gift
Of careless Nature are among the swift
And strong ennumbered, must assert our place
Of strongest, oftenest by the patient grace
That bears with failure. There is power to lift
The soul of man from those dark tides that drift
Despair and death to meet him, in the face*

*Of his own mercy. Ah, the task is light
To grow impatient with ourselves, to scorn
Our own absolving; — hard, indeed, to slight
The self-condemning of self-knowledge born:
But he is strongest who can most forgive
To that lost youth he would so fain relive.*



XXXIII.

TO-MORROW'S sun will never shine for thee :

Farewell, O love, for thou must go to-night

Forever from the darkness and the light !

Ah ! if this be, then take away from me

All sights and sounds of earth, and let me be

Alone with silence, on the silent height

Beyond the darkness ; for ye have no right

Before the veil of mine eternity.

Fear'st thou then, O love ? Alas ! no light

Will ever reach thee. Whether terrors, sown

In hapless childhood, spread their shadows drear,

Or the dark peace of everlasting night

Prevail above me, — unto me alone

Belongs the hour whose power is drawing near.

XXXIV.

*“ THIS night thy soul shall be required of thee! ” —
Ab! thine in life and death, my Father, thine
The kingdom and the power and victory,
And mine in Thee! O earth, no longer mine;
O desolate sea, whose morrow's sun will shine
In thy sad east, — what morning shall I see
In the new sunlight that has dawned for me
Where I lie here in darkness without sign!*

*And from the region of the light and air
Ye know not, in the silence that doth give
Earth unto earth, shall my assurance live
Through the denial of that vast despair,
That Christ was faithful to the Word He gave
And hath gone down with me into the grave.*

XXXV.

*THE night at last, the outer starless night—
The inconceivable dawn! Resign! Resign!
Surrender all things, Soul, no longer mine;
The useless legions of the daylight fight
In vain. Because thou wilt not yield thy right
To hope and fear that shall no more be thine,
Therefore alone the glimmering Space divine
Of Death grows dark and narrow in thy sight.*

*Life hath no counsel. Since it were too late
For pleasure or for deep mistake or sin
To barter with thy fears, let them alone,
And silently advance into the great
Approaching Presence, where thou shalt begin
To know thyself as thou wast always known.*

XXXVI.

*WHAT though we dream we understand so well
The mechanism of our life, that we
Have measured the unknowable decree
That moved on the dark waters, — and can tell
The meaning of Jehovah that there fell
The shadow upon Eden of a Tree
Of Life, — untasted? For we cannot flee
The powers that in the silent future dwell.*

*And though conviction have no sovereignty,
And hope no knowledge, by the initial law
Of mortal being, we may not control
The Springs of faith, — and Immortality
Hath power to baunt with an unreasoning awe
The distant, lonely centre of the soul.*



XXXVII.

*SO dear is life, and the beloved dust
That answers to our love no more so dear,
That the unconscious oracle sincere
Of our desire creates the innate trust
In life immortal. Even the hosts august,
Martyr and saint and ministering angel dear
To wistful faith, fade from his atmosphere
Who finds eternal Nature wisely just*

*In death as life ; who loves the truth so well
That life is not so dear. Although the law
Of outer forces may not mark the tide
And limit of the work of God, nor tell
The tale of being, with no lessened awe
He bows who dares to otherwise decide.*



XXXVIII.

*NOT out of Night and Time and Anarchy
Didst thou descend, nor thither canst return.
The light of immortality doth burn
Before thee as behind; the high decree
Of all-pervading law, the identity
Of life with law, not He who made can turn
From that stern order:—who art thou to spurn
The bondage of divine necessity?*

*Either is man immortal, or be sure
There is no immortality with God.
His Spirit must lie beneath the careless sod
Where thou art laid, or thou, forever pure,
Through these dark limits must with Him ascend
Where there is no beginning and no end.*

XXXIX.

*YE must be born again. What he may mean
Who Spake of blood and water and the swift
Fire of the Spirit, though we may not lift
The eyes of faith to see, never unseen
The deadly sin: no flattering mists between
Our conscience and the insisting knowledge drift
That we unless we may accept some gift
Of measureless repentance are unclean,*

*Unclean forever. And in heavenly scorn
Of human challenge, having place nor part
In human reason, lives the silent power—
The Resurrection and the Life, new born,
That answers to the cry of every heart
From the beginning even unto this hour.*

XL.

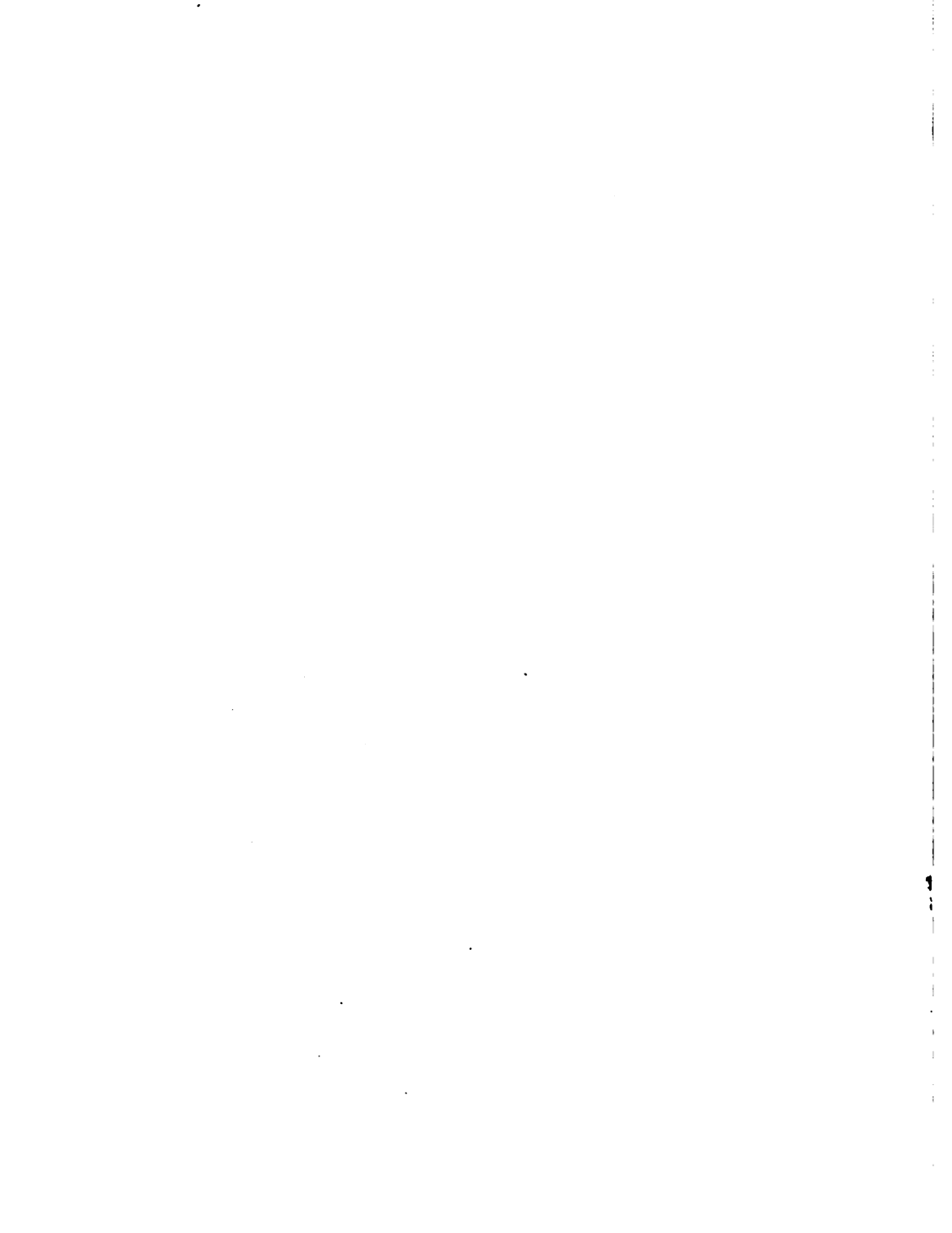
*CHILL is the dewy air; the vineyard gate
Is shut beneath the pitiless evening star;
No longer can the patient Master wait
To welcome harvest laborers from afar.
Dear Master, I am not as others are;
Oh, let me work although it be so late!
"Ab, willingly would I the gate unbar;
But none can work, the darkness is so great."*

*If I had known how the swift daylight sped
I would have come - yet Lord have we not heard,
That all who will may eat the living bread,
That thou wilt save us who believe thy Word?
"I will not say thee, nay; but ab, take heed,
That on my Word thou dost believe indeed."*

XLI.

*STERN, narrow soul, lost in the vague domain
Of mystic faith, strong will by accident
Of birth, that urged by heavenly discontent
The impossible heights of perfect peace to gain
Didst not prevail beyond the strife and pain
Of baffled sense, no tribute of lament
Above thy futile grief and toil misspent
Can reach thee now where from thy high disdain*

*Thou liest so low. Ah, were not too much given
For thy soul's ransom, would that thou wert free
From thy eternal solace to descend,
Only to tell us what availed to Heaven
Thy life of sacrifice and pain, that we
Might know of our self-pleasing years the end.*



XLII.

*TO walk this world with eyes forever cast
On the unsure foundations of our peace
Will buy of God no favor, nor decrease
The evil legions. Of the inviolate past
The world that is, the shadowed presence vast
Of worlds beyond, since nothing can release
The identity that binds them, let us cease
Our ignorant rebellion, nor contrast*

*Eternity and Time, and Life and Death,
As though we might appease the God of life
By our Memento Mori. Peace hath he,
He only steadfast, who remembereth
The strength of God nor dares unequal strife
With the conditions of humanity.*

XLIII.

EARTH'S highest gift, be others what they may,
Is leisure, — measured duty, needful care,
But time for thought. Alas! not everywhere
Have Duty's keenest followers won their day;
For the unguarded impulse to obey
The promptings of a thoughtless conscience, bare
To every sting, must the firm will impair,
And waste our strength in labyrinths far away

From simple action. Master of his soul
Is he whom careful Nature hath endowed
With power to stay, and let the world go by,
The world's conflicting duties past him roll,
Till he discern from all the tumult loud
The single voice with warrant from on high.



XLIV.

*ART thou at rest in the uncertain gain
Of wilful leisure, be not sure the source
Is in the unresting heavens. The transient force
Of human courage bears not even the strain
Of wise delay, and since our days contain
So little leisure to decide their course,
We dare not spare to Memory the remorse
For deeds of conscience,—haply blind or vain.*

*If thou art true unto the dreams of youth
When stern Jehovah spake as with the voice
Of thy Beloved, and His command was writ
In fire from Heaven, thou wilt discern the truth,
All falsehoods of thine own device among,
With instant inward radiance always lit.*

XLV.

THE unquiet hope wherein your days await
A good that comes not, and the fretful pain
That baunts the triumph of your fairest gain,
Comes from no malice of celestial fate,
But that the infinite truth has dawned too late
Ye cannot serve two masters. Ye remain
In half allegiance to the tyrant reign
Of Truth, the loving Master, stern and great,

Whilst every moment brings its petty weight
Of social bondage, falsehoods that restrain
From loyal action, courteous words that feign
A willing service to a world you hate.
Renounce that world, or from high truth refrain,
And neither master shall ye serve in vain.



XLVI.

*THE merciful God will yet bow down the skies
To my importunate prayer! Believe not so;
But set thy life to learn its task, and know
That thy keen wrong of sorrow, though it cries
To Heaven's justice in its blind surprise,
Is but a part of Heaven's remorseless, slow,
Primeval law. No sound above, below,
But the swift echo of thy voice, replies.*

*He alone life's compassionate answer gains
Who dares not waste his strength in vain appeal;
But seeks amid the wreck of surest hope
Whatever faith in God and man remains,
And even from his own heart would fain conceal
Of that dread loss the wide and desolate scope.*

XLVII.

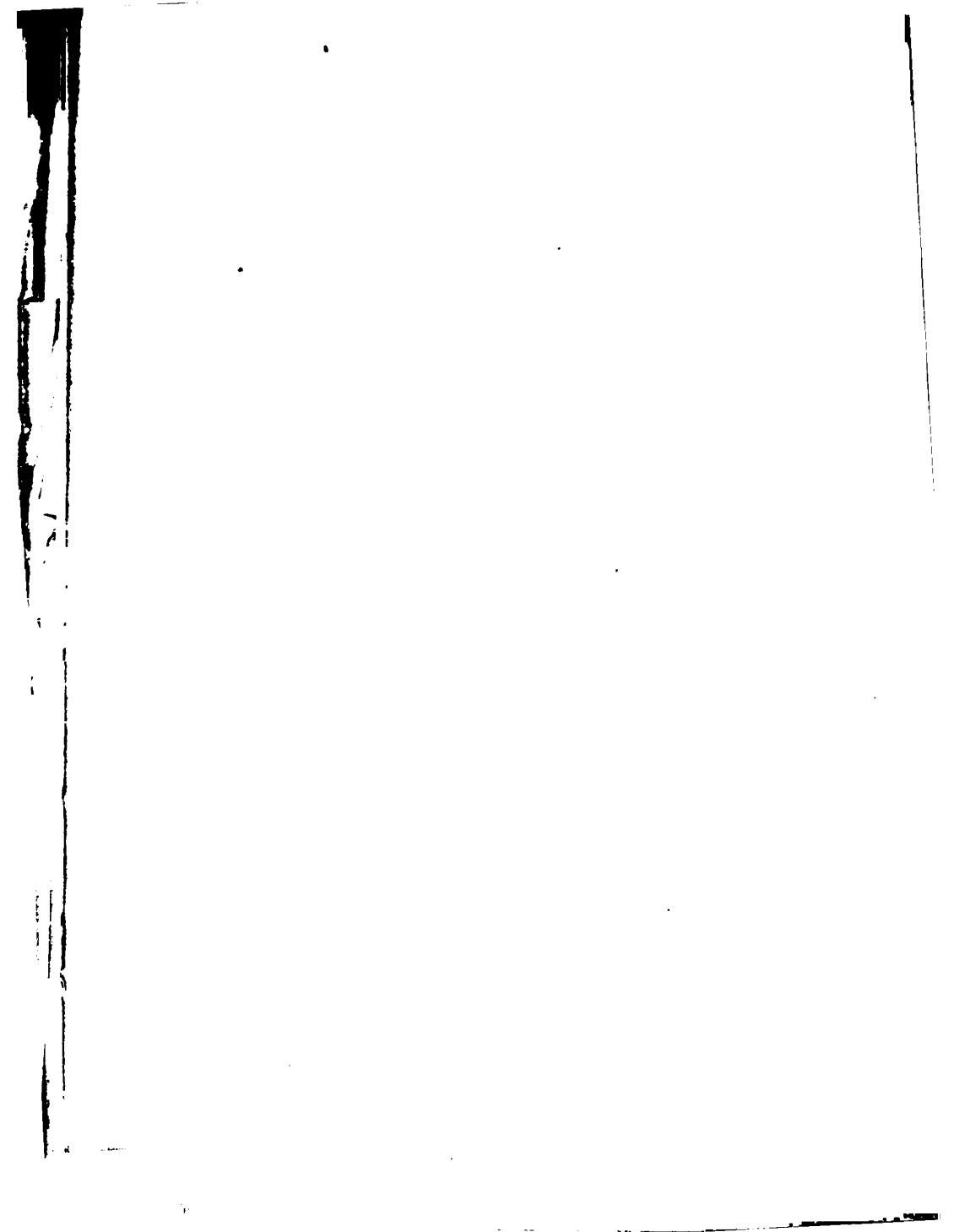
*IT is in no irreverence, friend and priest,
For thine high office that I must not choose
Even in these bonds of reverence, but refuse
Thy ministration, that to me, at least,
Can minister not, although it be the feast
Of multitudes, who, losing thee, would lose
Their bread of life. Let not thy pride accuse
Just Nature that some minds have been released*

*From that lay service ; but arraign the blind
If careful judgment that through time unknown
Has failed to sanction that release. O friend,
Seest thou then not two lives divide mankind,—
The priest's, though priest unto himself alone,
And his who must on priestly help depend !*

XLVIII.

*HE is it who bath made us, and not we
Ourselves: and in one human mould is cast,
Though with discerning justice we contrast
Ourselves with others, all humanity.
He is not from the bonds of nature free
Who wills to be in lonely priesthood classed;
The slowest years will manifest at last
The tether of his vaunted liberty.*

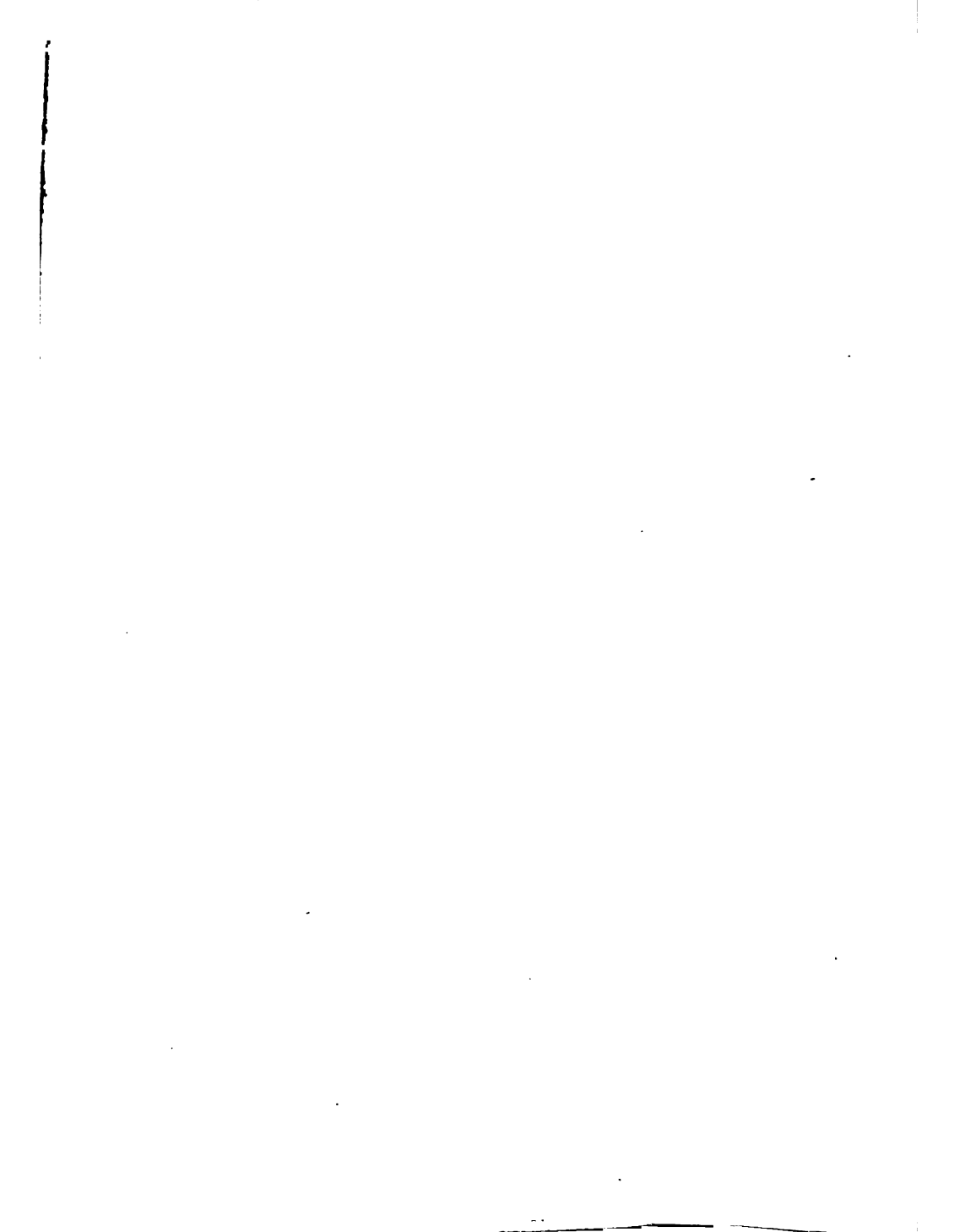
*For, pierced with secret sin, or weak with pain,
Or worn by long vicissitude of fate,
The organism of his weary brain
Will fear or superstition penetrate;
And be the nearest guide will fain receive,
And by a stranger's faith or hope believe.*



XLIX.

*THOU restless shepherd-dog, that up and down
Pursuest thy Master's sheep, art thou so sure
Thou knowest the greenest fold, the spring most pure
For every lamb? What floods of doctrine drown,
What beasts devour, what pastures dry and brown
May starve the flock, or bidden snare allure
To many a tempting shelter insecure,
Thou hast no heed save of thy own renown*

*For zealous service. Will not at thy hands
The Shepherd of his flock demand his sheep
Whom thou hast led from many a sheltered fold
Of simple faith, at last to treacherous sands
Of dogma, whereon pours the unsounded deep
Of infinite denial, dark and cold!*



L.

*I WHO am young, let me not crave too much
The burden of content, not too much strain
The shining mirage of Desire to touch;
Fruition's rest is full of nameless pain.
And yet, O End! O Rest! if there be such
In all the world, come in the mighty reign
Of autumn on this silent inland plain;
Come to a spirit toiling overmuch.*

*I, who am old, let not my heart annul
With futile hope the gain of suffering years,
Nor make the fine gold of their wisdom dull
With youth's sweet passion of unfruitful tears.
And yet, in this fair spring, with nature's tongue
I cry aloud: Would God I too were young!*

(99)

LI.

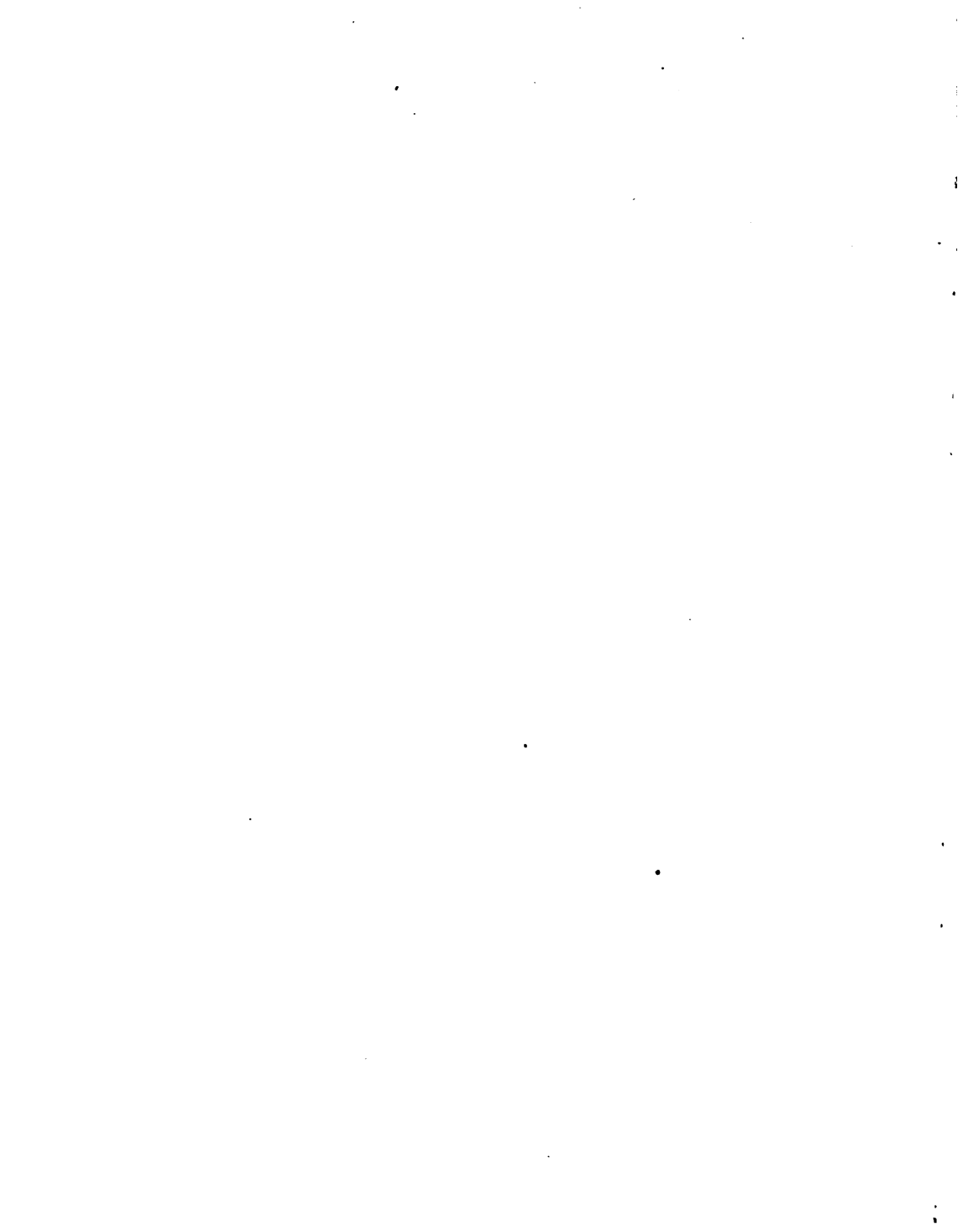
*AND thou, what dost thou here? my Spirit said,
With these disciples of the fold shut in,
Who hast no hope nor fear to theirs akin,
Who art not hungry for their living bread.
If from the arid deserts of the dead
Thou wouldst anew some Way of Life begin,
What sacrifice can take away thy sin,
Or give a form to faith whose soul is dead?*

*Sad Spirit! I know not why thou seest me here:
Only the well-remembered hymn and prayer
I hear again — half reverent, half in scorn;
The unforgotten dreams of faith draw near,
And fill these waking moments with the air
Of some dim Eden where their light was born.*

LII.

*MAN is a race of kings. Who that is born
Knows not that he should have been born to rule,
And not to be the rash and pliant fool
Of inclination, in obedience sworn
To Nature, cruel master! Ah, forlorn,
In our own kingdom captive, in what school
Shall we regain the knowledge how to rule,—
To live no longer prey to our self-scorn!*

*Obey Thyself! and thou shalt hold the key
Unto the wide dominion of the earth,
And high alliance with the powers of Heaven!
Angels and kings and hosts will honor thee;
Thou wilt have grace befitting royal birth,
Even to forgive the seventy times of seven.*



LIII.

*DEEP virtue bath this cup of healing cold
That Wisdom offers, that however rare
May seem your life's endurance, ye but share
A common lot; that every heart has told
Your secret of experience in the old
And pitiless desert of the heavenly air!
Ah, false and vain! No man can lightlier bear
That man has borne, — nor earth's arcana bold*

*A virtue that bath any cure to give
Life's weary fever. Let us rather face
The outer snow and night, — the Land of Death;
Whereof we know not save that God doth live
And rest therein, and from the sunless Space
Alone the voice of Duty answereth.*

LIV.

*LORD, where thou art the night forgets to fall,
The winter stays his hand from shore to shore;
The music of the charmer charms no more,
The voice of the abyss forbears to call.
On the dark earth as in a silent hall
Where mortal foot has never trod before;
I alone enter through an open door
Into the presence of the All in all. .*

*Mine are all things in heaven or in earth
If I shall ask them. O my Father, one,
One thing alone has any place or worth
To me, or unto Thee, beneath the sun,—
Faith in myself,—faith that Thou gavest to me
A life that was begun, that ends in Thee.*



LV.

*MY days, Speed not so fast unto the West
From the swift mornings, — not so far, so fast!
O Night of nights! let the long shadows cast
About me linger. For although the best,
The hopeful hours — our birthright's high bequest
Are squandered, though the tide of faith is past,
God, so long silent, Speaks again at last,
And I, though I am weary, would not rest.*

*He waits no more; He has undone the door,
Saying: "Not yet, not yet too late!" Who well
Knoweth how late, — into what hands before
I have betrayed Him. Oh, Immanuel!
Father or Son — we know not — unto me
Art Thou indeed the old reality!*

LVI.

*THE joy of Nature cannot know foretaste
Of sorrow; never human hope forlorn
Disturbs the peace of that celestial scorn,
Nor stays the pulses of her noble baste.
The light that glows upon the silent waste
Of evening hills, the long, white flash of morn
On misty seas have gladness, heaven born,
By nought that is of earth to be effaced.*

*And that the voice of beauty wakes a chord
Of an unspeakable sadness in our lives,
Is only that within us there survives
Some unexplained message of the Lord,
Born with our birth, and buried with the dead,—
Never to any man interpreted.*



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